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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 003056

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - EUROPE: UK ELECTIONS, CAPTURE  
OF AL-LIBBI

PARIS - MAY 6, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. UK ELECTIONS
2. CAPTURE OF AL-LIBBI

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

TONY BLAIR'S RE-ELECTION AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT  
CHIRAC'S TEN YEARS AT THE ELYSEE ARE THE PRINCIPAL FRONT-PAGE  
STORIES TODAY. CENTRIST BUSINESS-ORIENTED LA TRIBUNE CALLS THE  
PARALLEL BETWEEN THE RE-ELECTION AND THE ANNIVERSARY  
"PAINFUL." "TONY BLAIR HAS SET GREAT BRITAIN ON THE COURSE TO  
GROWTH. WHILE JACQUES CHIRAC'S ACHIEVEMENTS ARE DECIDEDLY LESS  
BRILLIANT." (SEE PART C)

THE ANNIVERSARY OF JACQUES CHIRAC'S PRESIDENCY PROMPTS A  
NUMBER OF COMMENTATORS TO FOCUS ON FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY  
OVER THE LAST DECADE.

IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX'S EDITORIAL, FRANCOIS ERNEWEIN OPINES  
CONCERNING PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TEN-YEARS IN OFFICE: "THE  
ASSESSMENT OF HIS LAST TEN YEARS IN OFFICE WILL GREATLY HINGE  
ON THE OUTCOME OF THE REFERENDUM ON MAY 29. IF THE YES VOTE  
TAKES IT, THE PRESIDENT'S WORK OVER THE LAST DECADE WILL BE  
JUSTIFIED. A NO VOTE HOWEVER WOULD MARK THE SECOND MAJOR  
FAILURE OF HIS MANDATE AFTER THE FAILED DISSOLUTION OF 1997."

FRENCH HISTORIAN NICOLAS BAVEREZ IS INTERVIEWED IN RIGHT-OF-  
CENTER LE FIGARO ON PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN  
LIGHT OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY. BAVEREZ CRITICIZES FRENCH FOREIGN  
POLICY AS BEING A "RHETORIC OF POWER WITHOUT THE INSTRUMENT OF  
POWER" AND ADDS: "FRANCE REMAINS CLOSED IN ITS POSITION OF AN  
OLD NOSTALGIC COUNTRY OF LOST GRANDEUR ON THE MARGINS OF  
EUROPE, SPECTATOR OF CURRENT HISTORY BEING WRITTEN IN SPITE OF  
HER. THE DEADLOCK THAT FRANCE WAS IN FOLLOWING THE RADICAL  
POSITION IT ADOPTED DURING THE WAR IN IRAQ IS, THANKFULLY,  
RIGHTING ITSELF DUE TO THE RECONCILIATION EFFORT LED BY GEORGE  
W. BUSH AFTER HIS RE-ELECTION; THE END OF THE SYRIAN  
OCCUPATION OF LEBANON. PROVES THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES CAN  
OBTAIN POSITIVE RESULTS WHEN THEY WORK TOGETHER."

DORIAN MALOVIC IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX ALSO ANALYZES THIS  
ANNIVERSARY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY. "A STUDY  
BY THE PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY ATTITUDES AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SHOWS THAT THERE IS A VERY POSITIVE  
PERCEPTION OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY IN THE WORLD. WITH THE  
NOTEWORTHY EXCEPTION OF THE UNITED STATES WHERE A MAJORITY OF  
PUBLIC OPINION CONTINUES TO HAVE A NEGATIVE OUTLOOK ON  
FRANCE." IN ECONOMIC RIGHT-OF-CENTER LES ECHOS' FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS EDITORIALIST JACQUES HUBERT-RODIER WRITES IN AN  
ANALYSIS ENTITLED "JACQUES CHIRAC OR TEN YEARS OF CONSTANCY IN  
FOREIGN POLICY," "BEFORE LEAVING HIS POST A FEW WEEKS AGO U.S.  
AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE HOWARD H. LEACH STATED: 'NO OTHER FRENCH  
LEADER HAD EVER ACTIVELY WORKED AGAINST U.S. INTERESTS. WHEN A  
FRIEND WORKS ACTIVELY AGAINST YOU IT NOT ONLY HURTS YOUR  
FEELINGS, IT MAKES YOU ANGRY.' DID JACQUES CHIRAC GO TOO FAR  
IN 2003 BY BRANDISHING THE THREAT OF VETOING ANY RESOLUTION  
THAT AUTHORIZED USING MILITARY FORCE?"

THE FRIDAY EDITION OF LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE LEADS WITH THE  
ARREST IN PAKISTAN OF AL QAEDA LEADER ABOU FARAJ AL-LIBBI AND  
PUTS FORWARD THAT "THIS ARREST GIVES NEW HOPE TO THE AMERICANS  
IN THEIR HUNT FOR OSSAMA BEN LADEN." (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UK ELECTIONS

"THE BRITISH LESSON"

THE EDITORIAL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO BY PIERRE ROUSSELIN  
(0506): "THE SUCCESS OF THE LABOUR PARTY IS AS MUCH THE  
SUCCESS OF GORDON BROWN AS IT IS OF TONY BLAIR. THE PRIME  
MINISTER HAS HAD THE WISDOM TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS AND TO PUSH  
HIS PROBABLE SUCCESSOR TO THE FRONT LINES AWARE THAT HIS  
POPULARITY HAD SERIOUSLY SUFFERED AFTER THE WAR IN IRAQ WHICH  
A MAJORITY OF BRITISH WERE OPPOSED TO."

"THE BRITISH FIRE"

PATRICK SABATIER'S EDITORIAL IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (05/06): "TONY BLAIR CRUSHED HIS HOPES TO PLACE GREAT BRITAIN AT THE HEART OF EUROPE BY SEEKING TO ESTABLISH A 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP' WITH THE U.S."

CAPTURE OF AL-LIBBI

"THE CAPTURE OF AL-LIBBI"

IN REGIONAL LA NOUVELLE REPUBLIQUE DU CENTRE OUEST, JEAN-CLAUDE ARBONA WRITES (05/06): "THIS CAPTURE UNDERSCORES THE AMERICAN DETERMINATION TO DEFEAT AL QAEDA THAT WAS THE SOURCE OF ITS HUMILIATION IN 2001. WILL THIS CAPTURE PUT THE U.S. ON THE TRACK OF BEN LADEN? WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, IT IS PROOF OF THE PARTNERSHIP THAT THE U.S. HAS ESTABLISHED WITH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM."

"PAKISTANI SUCCESS AGAINST AL QAEDA"

MARIE-FRANCE CALLE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/05): "IT IS A REAL SUCCESS STORY FOR ISLAMABAD AND WASHINGTON. A VICTORY IN THE WAR ON TERROR ON THE VERY HAZY BORDER THAT SEPARATES PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. THIS CAPTURE WAS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS OF ISLAMABAD WITH AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE. TODAY IT WILL BE UP TO THE VERY ANTI-AMERICAN PAKISTANI PUBLIC OPINION TO JUDGE THIS COLLABORATIVE EFFORT. MUSHARRAF HAS PRACTICALLY TURNED THE HUNT FOR AL QAEDA INTO A PERSONAL MATTER. BUT THIS IS INCONSEQUENTIAL WHEN WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS AL QAEDA'S ELIMINATION IN PAKISTAN."